

## **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE SEPTEMBER 13, 2011**

### **DESIGN REVIEW PANEL PILOT PROJECT FILE 25.5.1**

#### **Recommendation**

The Commissioner of Planning in consultation with the Design Review Panel selection committee recommends:

1. THAT the Recommended Candidates for the City's Design Review Panel pilot project, shown on Attachment #1 (Confidential – Mayor and Members of Council Only), BE APPROVED, for a 2 year period.
2. THAT the Design Review Panel pilot project commence in October 2011, and meet every 3 to 5 weeks depending on the number of applications.
3. THAT the pilot project run for a period of 2 years, and that the Vaughan Development Planning Department report back to the Committee of the Whole on what has been accomplished on an annual basis.

#### **Economic Impact**

In order to establish and operate a Design Review Panel, it will be necessary to include funding in the yearly budget. The panel will provide their time on a volunteer basis, however, funding will be necessary for staff overtime (if after hours work is required), administrative support, materials/supplies, and travelling expenses of the panel members. The recommended yearly budget is \$10,000.00, which is included in the current approved 2011 budgets for the Development Planning Department (\$5,000.00) and Policy Planning Department (\$5,000.00). Each department will contribute the necessary funding from within their existing base budgets over the next 2 years.

#### **Communications Plan**

A Design Review Panel web-page will be added to the City of Vaughan's public web-site, outlining its purpose, meeting protocol, meeting schedule, appointment of members, and posting of meeting minutes. Details of each meeting, including agenda and meeting location, will be advertised on the City's web-site in advance of each meeting. The launch of the panel will be communicated to stakeholders. A communication plan is being jointly prepared by Corporate Communications and the Office of the Commissioner of Planning for this purpose.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council approval on the recommended members for the City's Design Review Panel pilot project as selected by the Design Review Panel selection committee. The creation of the Design Review Panel and Terms of Reference were approved by Vaughan Council on June 15, 2009.

#### **Background and Analysis**

##### **Functions of the Panel**

The Design Review Panel is set up as an advisory body to the Planning Department, and takes place as an additional stream of consultation within the existing framework of development review. As an advisory group, the Panel makes recommendations only. It is not a decision

making body and does not have the authority to approve or refuse. Council will remain the decision making body on any recommendations brought forward from staff.

The functions of the Panel are as follows:

- to assist Council in fulfilling Official Plan objectives related to urban design and sustainability by providing City staff, the applicant and their consultants with independent design advice on public and private development within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre and other areas of urban intensification within the City of Vaughan;
- to aid development proponents to deliver design excellence through the development approvals process, including high quality architecture, landscape architecture, urban design and environmental sustainability;
- to promote an understanding of design excellence and the importance of good design to our City; and,
- to foster an effective working relationship with the development industry.

#### Scope of Work

The Panel will evaluate development applications brought forward to it. It will provide professional and objective advice to the Commissioner of Planning and other Commissions including Community Services and Engineering on matters of design that affect the public realm, which includes the design of buildings, site plans, parks, open spaces, and associated streetscapes in order to promote design excellence.

#### Design Review Panel Nominations

Based on the Council approved Terms of Reference (June 15, 2009) shown on Attachment #2, a call for Expression of Interest was advertised through professional association newsletters and web-sites.

The Expressions of Interest were reviewed by a staff committee with members from Policy Planning, Development Planning/Urban Design, and the Commissioner of Planning. Candidates were chosen based on the criteria outlined in the Terms of Reference. A list of recommended Panel Member candidates is brought forward for Council's consideration and approval in Attachment #1 (Mayor and Members of Council Only).

The recommended candidates will offer the required high level and diversity of professional skills for the Design Panel to effectively address the complexity of contemporary urban development and redevelopment projects in support of the pursuit of design excellence. The nominated panel members provide experience in the following professional areas: planning, urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, ecology, heritage, and social/cultural issues related to design.

#### Operation and Meeting Schedule

The Commissioner of Planning or his designate(s) will be responsible for the management/operation of the Design Review Panel.

The Design Review Panel will meet on a monthly basis as required, during regular work hours, to the extent possible.

### Meeting Procedures

Panel meetings will be open to City Councillors, staff, and the public to attend and will be attended by appropriate City staff as required.

Development Planning staff will make a brief presentation to provide the Panel with an understanding of the planning and technical analysis of the project outlining its context, background, scope, related policies, design policies or guidelines, and to reiterate the design opportunities and issues, which staff would like the panel to address.

The applicant and their design consultant will be encouraged to participate in the Panel's review sessions and will be given the opportunity to present project objectives and how it responds to the City's policies.

Subsequent to staff and proponent presentations, the Panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the project team on any aspect of their development proposal. The Panel will review the presentation material, followed by a discussion on the merits of the design of the project.

With the guidance of the Chairperson, the Panel will formulate their recommendations for the project at the end of the Design Review Panel Meeting. Staff and the Panel Chairperson will prepare minutes of the session.

### Integration of Development Approvals

To ensure that the Design Review Panel process is appropriately matched with the development approvals process, meetings will be held on a monthly basis. The meeting schedules will be coordinated with Council meetings to ensure that projects are moved through the approvals process in a timely manner. Meeting schedules will be monitored and adjusted if required.

### Monitoring

A significant aspect of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project is the continual refinement of the Panel's process and the evaluation of its function during the trial period. Accordingly, it will be necessary for staff to monitor the Panel's functioning by collecting feedback from applicants and design consultants whose projects have been reviewed, and to evaluate any suggested changes to meeting procedures.

### Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2020/Strategic Plan

This report is consistent with the priorities set forth in Vaughan Vision 2020, particularly "Demonstrate Effective Leadership" and "Plan and Manage Growth & Economic Well-being".

### Regional Implications

N/A

### Conclusion

The Expressions of Interest were reviewed by an internal staff committee with members from Policy Planning, Development Planning/Urban Design, and the Commissioner of Planning. The recommended Panel Members in Attachment #1 (Mayor and Members of Council Only) are brought forward for Council's consideration. The staff committee is of the opinion that the recommended candidates will offer the required high level and diversity of professional skills for the Design Panel to effectively address the complexity of contemporary urban development and redevelopment projects in support of the pursuit of design excellence. The nominated panel

members provide experience in the following professional areas: planning, urban design, landscape architecture, architecture, ecology, heritage, and social/cultural issues related to design. Should Council concur, staff will notify the approved Panel Members and the first Design Review Meeting will be scheduled for October, 2011, with a priority focus being placed on the review of active applications in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre.

**Attachments**

1. Recommended Candidates For City of Vaughan Design Review Panel Pilot Project (Confidential – Mayor and Members of Council ONLY)
2. Council Approved Terms of Reference (June 15, 2009)

**Report prepared by:**

Moira Wilson, Urban Designer, ext. 8017  
Rob Bayley, Manager of Urban Design, ext. 8254

Respectfully submitted,

JOHN MACKENZIE  
Commissioner of Planning

GRANT UYEVAMA  
Director of Development Planning

/CM

## ATTACHMENT 2

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE DESIGN REVIEW PANEL PILOT PROJECT (COUNCIL APPROVED – JUNE 15, 2009)**

#### 1.0 Purpose of Design Review Panel

The Design Review Panel is strictly an advisory body and makes recommendations only. It does not have authority to approve or refuse projects or make policy decisions. It is not intended to replace the development approval process, or the role of Council. It is an additional stream of consultation to enhance the development approval process.

#### 2.0 Duties of the Panel

- (i) To give independent design advice to staff, the applicant, and their consultants on all development applications within the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre, and other areas in the City where higher density development is taking place and where Secondary Plans are either in place or are being formulated, specifically on design quality of the developments when evaluated in accordance with Vaughan's policies for the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre and other areas such as Steeles Avenue West, Yonge Street, Carrville, Centre Street, Regional Road No.7 and heritage villages/areas;
- (ii) To provide independent advice to staff, applicants, and their consultants, prior to the submission of relevant development applications in order to aid development proponents in delivering projects which contribute good quality design in the public realm;
- (iii) To promote the understanding of design quality, and provide advice on other mechanisms and initiatives in achieving high quality design; and,
- (iv) To foster an effective working relationship with the development industry.

#### 3.0 Scope of Work

The Panel will evaluate development applications brought forward to it, and provide professional objective advice to the Commissioner of Planning, at the site plan approvals stage, on matters of design that affect the public realm, including the design of proposed buildings, site plans, structures, parks and open spaces, and associated streetscapes in order to promote and uphold standards of design excellence.

#### Design Review Panel Membership

- (i) The Design Review Panel will comprise not less than seven (7) volunteer members for any given meeting, who have been appointed for a period of two years. At least three (3) architects, one (1) landscape architect, one (1) engineer, one (1) urban designer and one (1) other individual from a different discipline.
- (ii) The City will issue a request for expression of interest for Panel members and will include criteria to ensure an appropriate mix of professionals with appropriate expertise.
- (iii) The criteria for Panel membership nomination will be developed on best practices research of other municipalities with Design Review Panels and tailored to Vaughan's

local needs. Emphasis will be placed on qualified design professionals who are well respected among their peers.

- (iv) City staff will nominate panel members from expressions of interest to ensure appropriate panel membership mix, and make recommendations for approval by City Council.
- (v) Panel members will serve a two year term.
- (vi) The Panel members are to be non-paid positions. Traveling expenses to panel meetings will be covered by the City.
- (vii) Each member of the Panel has the duty to advise of any conflict of interest with respect to development applications being reviewed by the Panel. In this regard the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act will apply and the Panel member shall decline to participate in the review of that application.
- (viii) No City staff or members of Council shall be appointed to the Design Review Panel.

#### 4.0 Panel Nomination Criteria

Emphasis will be placed on qualified design professionals who are well respected among their peers, who have a broad range of experience.

The following criteria will be employed to nominate members of the Design Review Panel:

- (i) Membership in a professional design association:
  - a. Ontario Association of Architects,
  - b. Ontario Association of Landscape Architects,
  - c. Ontario Professional Planners Institute, or
  - d. Professional Engineers of Ontario
- (ii) Minimum 15 years of practice in their respective field.
- (ii) The Panel shall have a wide range of relevant professional experience including:
  - a. High quality design in the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, planning and engineering,
  - b. Mix of local and international practice,
  - c. Mix of project scales,
  - d. Mix of project types (commercial, residential, institutional, parks and public space design),
  - e. Knowledge and practice of sustainable design, and
  - f. Professional research and academic involvement.
- (iv) Respected among peers as recognized by awards, publications and teaching appointments.

#### 5.0 Meeting Schedule

- (i) The Commissioner of Planning or his designate(s) will be responsible for the management/operation of the Design Review Panel.
- (ii) The Design Review Panel will meet on a monthly basis as required, during regular work hours.

- (iii) The members of the Design Review Panel shall appoint, from their members, a Chairperson, who will preside over discussions to ensure matters brought forward for discussion are fairly considered.
- (iv) Lobbying of the Design Review Panel members by applicants is strictly prohibited.
- (v) Minutes of the meeting and the recording of the Panel Recommendations will be the responsibility of the Development Planning Department.
- (vi) Individual Panel Members should not be identified in the minutes; however, individual specific comments can be recorded without attribution.
- (vii) The Minutes will be reviewed by relevant staff and the Chair prior to distribution to the Panel Members and Applicant in final form.
- (viii) Minutes will be forwarded to the Panel Members, staff and applicant as soon as possible after the meeting, in order to provide timely written summaries of the review.
- (ix) Panel Members will be asked to approve the minutes at the next Panel meeting and will have opportunity to comment on the minutes at that time.
- (x) Applicants will not have the opportunity or ability to request any changes to the minutes.

#### 6.0 Meeting Procedures

- (i) Panel meetings will be open to City Councillors and appropriate staff to attend and will be attended by other City staff as required. Planning staff will make a brief presentation to provide the Panel with an understanding of the planning and technical analysis of the project outlining its context, background, scope, related policies, design policies or guidelines and to reiterate the design concerns which staff would like the panel to address.
- (ii) The applicant and their design consultant will be given an opportunity to make a brief presentation to explain the project objectives and how it responds to the City's policies.
- (iii) Subsequent to staff and proponent presentation the panel will have the opportunity to ask questions of the project team on any aspect of their development proposal.
- (iv) The Panel will then review the presentation material, followed by a discussion on the merits of the design of the project. With the guidance of the Chairperson, the Panel will formulate their recommendations for the project at the end of the Design Review Panel Meeting.
- (v) The Panel's comments will be based on Council approved land use and urban design policies. The role of the Panel is to help interpret the policy for specific sites and projects and point out areas of concern that need to be resolved respecting proposed developments.
- (vi) Following the meeting, the Development Planning Department will undertake a review of the recommendations and determine the appropriate actions to be taken by the applicant.
- (vii) The Development Planning Department will advise the Panel on actions taken, as a result of the Panel's recommendation, prior to the following Design Review Panel Meeting.

## 7.0 Presentation Materials

- (i) Presentation materials for projects for review must be submitted not less than three (3) weeks prior to the meeting.
- (ii) Presentation materials should contain the following information:
  - Key Plan;
  - Colour copies of the site plan, building elevations and landscape plan;
  - Photographs of surrounding lands and streetscape;
  - Coloured renderings, digital perspectives or a physical massing model showing the proposed development and its relationship to surrounding lands;
  - Building elevations and materials used;
  - Floor plans of ground floors;
  - Brief project description.
- (iii) All presentation material should be mounted on panels not greater than 0.9m x 1.2m (3' x 4') in size.

In addition, twenty (20) copies of the presentation material in a bound booklet form being no larger than 28 cm x 43 cm (11" x 17" landscape format) shall also be provided by the applicant to the Development Planning Department.
- (iv) The applicant may choose to prepare a Power Point Presentation with the above information to further describe the proposal to the Panel at the Design Review Panel meeting.
- (v) Meeting agendas along with copies of the presentation material and Development Planning Department information will be forwarded to the Design Review Panel members and the applicant, not less than two (2) weeks in advance of the meeting.

## 8.0 Integration of Development Approvals

To ensure that the Design Review Panel process is appropriately matched with the development approvals process, meetings will be held on a monthly basis. The meeting schedules will be coordinated with Council meetings to ensure that projects are moved through the approvals process in a timely manner. Meetings schedules will be monitored and adjusted if required.

## 9.0 Monitoring

A significant aspect of the Design Review Panel Pilot Project is the continual refinement of the Panel's process and evaluation of its function during the trial period. Accordingly, it will be necessary to monitor the Panel's function by collecting feedback from applicants and design consultants whose projects have been reviewed and to evaluate any necessary changes that may be needed to the procedures.